



Oadby & Wigston

Town Centres Area Action Plan

Matter Three Wigston Town Centre





3.1 How robust are the spatial vision and objectives for Wigston town centre (paras 4.18-4.28), for example in relation to any reasonable alternatives, and in the face of the current economic climate?

- 3.1.1** Wigston Town Centre is one of only two town centres in the Leicester Principal Urban Area, as set out in the Leicester Principal Urban Area Strategic Planning Context document which was prepared by the Borough Council as part of the evidence base in support of the Core Strategy and which was consulted upon with all of the local authorities forming the Leicester Principal Urban Area.
- 3.1.2** The other town centre is Beaumont Leys and is located on the opposite side of the Leicester Principal Urban Area to the north of Leicester city centre. It is designated a town centre by virtue of the range of retail facilities it provides but does not follow the traditional characteristics of a town centre in that it is essentially a shopping centre surrounded by a library, leisure centre and extensive areas of car parking. However, it contains only a limited amount of other town centre services, and does not contain any offices or other commercial opportunities.
- 3.1.3** In addition, the out of town Fosse Shopping Park is located to the south east of Leicester adjacent to the Leicester Principal Urban Area. Although this draws shoppers from the Leicester Principal Urban Area, located adjacent to the M1 and M69 it also has a regional draw as well as from the wider Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area.
- 3.1.4** Therefore, other than Oadby, Wigston is the other town within the Leicester Principal Urban Area that has the potential to fulfil a role as a destination for shopping, services and commercial opportunities.
- 3.1.5** In recent years, despite its potential, Wigston has suffered from a lack of positive planning and investment. Most significant new residential development has been in South Wigston or Oadby limiting any increase in footfall, the public realm is not of a high quality, and there have been no opportunities for new retail or commercial floor space.
- 3.1.6** However, a package of measures to support the regeneration of Wigston town centre is now in place, including:
- an increased catchment for the town with the Direction for Growth immediately to the south east of Wigston identified in the Core Strategy
 - development sites identified in the Masterplan for Wigston town centre, supported by the policies and allocations in the Town Centres Area Action Plan
 - the proposals for improving the public realm in the town centre which is to benefit from European Regional Development Fund investment
 - the establishment of a new dedicated Economic Development and Regeneration Team within the Borough Council to co-ordinate and lead on implementation of proposals for development contained in the Town Centres Area Action Plan and which is directly able to work alongside and influence the Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Partnership
 - the presence of a new Town Centre Manager to lead on establishing a Town Centre Partnership, promotion and events



- The submission of a bid for Wigston town centre to become a 'Portas Pilot' which has generated a good deal of support and momentum from the local community to work together to improve the town and introduce new initiatives, such as new specialist markets

- 3.1.7** As a result, the necessary planning policy and public sector intervention and support is now in place, combined with the involvement of the local town centre community, for Wigston to become a very attractive proposition to retail and commercial organisations wishing to invest in and/or locate in the area, thus ensuring that the spatial vision and objectives for Wigston town centre are robust and achievable.
- 3.1.8** The alternatives would be to not invest in the regeneration of Wigston town centre and for the town to continue as it is or to seek greater investment in the town. However, neither of these approaches would allow the delivery of the spatial strategy and objectives set out in the Core Strategy. There is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that greater investment would be achievable and deliverable and doing less than proposed would risk the further decline of Wigston over the plan period and the inability for Wigston to act as a main town serving the southern part of the Leicester Principal Urban Area and specifically the Direction for Growth to the south east of Wigston.
- 3.1.9** With regard to the economic climate the outlook has changed significantly during the process of preparing the Town Centres Area Action Plan. With regard to the quantum of development proposed for Wigston, the economic climate was a matter of discussion during the Examination of the Core Strategy. However, the Inspector's view was that given the plan period is to 2026, there is likely to be a significant improvement in the economic climate during that time and that the present situation should not prevent planning for growth in the future.
- 3.1.10** Therefore, the Council has in general followed this approach in the preparation of the Town Centres Area Action Plan. The Council has been careful to ensure however that it is not over optimistic in the phasing of the implementation of the various aspects of the Masterplan, whilst also ensuring general conformity with regard to the Core Strategy, for example, in bringing housing forward in line with the housing trajectory.



What is the economic justification for the scale of the proposed retail provision in policy 13, in view of factors such as the proximity of rival centres, eg Highcross and Fosse Park, the growth in internet shopping and the number of existing empty retail units in the town centre? Would it not be cheaper and more cost effective to focus on bringing into use empty shop units in the town centre?

- 3.1.11** The economic justification for the scale of the proposed retail provision in Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 13 is provided by the Council's Retail Capacity Study, undertaken in 2008 and which took into account local circumstances and changing retail patterns such as the proximity of rival centres and the growth in internet shopping.
- 3.1.12** The study identified the retail capacity of the whole Borough and then provided a split between the 3 settlements. This study provided part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy and during its Examination the Inspector recommended that the figures be incorporated into Core Strategy Policy 2.
- 3.1.13** It should be noted that Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 13 provides for 1,200 sq m (gross) less floor space than the approximate figure set out in Core Strategy policy 2 and this is partly to reflect the changes to the current economic climate. This is outlined in paragraph 4.49, but is wrongly referenced to office development when it should be referring to retail development. This will be corrected through the schedule of minor changes.
- 3.1.14** However, as mentioned above there is likely to be a significant improvement in the economic climate during the plan period up to 2016. By not maximising the potential growth for Wigston in the Area Action Plan, the town centre would not be in a strong position to capitalise upon planned population growth and this potential for increased spend could be lost to rival shopping centres, such as the Highcross Shopping Centre and Fosse Shopping Park.
- 3.1.15** With regard to the number of existing retail units in Wigston that are empty, this has increased from the comparatively low vacancy rate of the 5 per cent recorded in the Baseline Study (2007). However, these units tend to be located towards the periphery of the shopping areas (for example, the far eastern end of Bell Street and the northern end of Leicester Road) which tend to be less attractive to retailers and hence why spending money on bringing them back into use without any other form of intervention would not necessarily work. Creating new retail space in more central locations and with floor plates that would be taken up by national retailers will increase the footfall in the town and therefore increase the viability of some of the currently empty shop units to independent retailers and encourage existing retailers to remain in the town.



How much comparison retail floor space has been completed over the last decade? What would happen if the retail growth set out in policy 13 failed to materialise?

3.1.16 The Borough Council does not monitor comparison retail floor space completions. However, anecdotally, the Council is confident that there has been no significant change in the amount of comparison retail floor space over the last decade.

3.1.17 Paragraph 3.1.6 to 3.1.7 explain how through a combination of evidence documents and the package of measures that is in place to support the regeneration of Wigston town centre, the Borough Council is confident that that the level of retail growth set out in policy 13 will materialise. However, if this were not to be the case, then further consideration would be given to the phasing plan through the annual monitoring process to allow the retail growth to move to a later phase.

3.2 Relationship of the town centres: In what ways should Wigston and Oadby town centres complement and not compete with each other?

3.2.1 Paragraphs 4.18 and 4.19 of the Core Strategy set out two very different objectives for Wigston and Oadby town centres and this has been carried through into the Town Centres Area Action Plan objectives (paragraphs 4.24 and 5.29).

3.2.2 In summary, Wigston is the Borough's main town with a focus on encouraging greater national retailer representation and civic function, and acting as a key service centre for the whole Borough and beyond and the Direction for Growth to the south east of Wigston.

3.2.3 Oadby is a small town catering for smaller independent and specialist shops, cafes and restaurants, whilst acknowledging that the current mix of national and local retailer representation needs to be maintained. Although serving the immediate local community and students living on the University of Leicester's Oadby campus it also has a catchment larger than Wigston but is visited on a less frequent basis due to the more specialist nature of the shops.

3.3 How does the plan address the night time economy?

3.3.1 Currently there is very little in the way of a night time economy in Wigston or Oadby town centre. This results in mainly empty town centres in the evening which increases the likelihood of anti social behaviour taking place and indeed, both towns currently, on occasion, suffer from this.

3.3.2 Existing residential development is not integrated into the town centres and therefore does not play a key role. The Town Centre Area Action Plan aims to rectify this by introducing residential development onto key sites in both towns. Having people living in the town centres will greatly encourage activity, therefore reducing the likelihood of anti social behaviour.



- 3.3.3** The Town Centres Area Action Plan also creates opportunities for other activities that generally create an evening footfall, such as cafes and restaurants, for example Chapel Mill in Wigston and Brooksby Square in Oadby.
- 3.3.4** Question 6.9 under Matter 6 provides information on monitoring changing crime rates, which may be able to allow monitoring of the impact that the Town Centres Area Action Plan has upon reducing anti social behaviour during the evenings and at night.
- 3.4** **Para 4.93, in relation to Chapel Mill (policy 16) refers to a proposed range of shop unit size, based presumably on the master plan. Is the desired range of retail unit size important to the viability and vitality of other parts of Wigston town centre as well, and if so, should policy 13 provide more direction, eg on a desired range of shop sizes/development plates to help the town centre maintain or enhance its distinctive retail offer?**
- 3.4.1** In addition to 4.93 referring to '*a range of shop unit size*', paragraph 4.65 relating to Burgess Junction also refers to a 'range of new retail space' and a '*wider mix of retail outlets in terms of size and occupier*'.
- 3.4.2** In terms of the Masterplan, units at Chapel Mill lend themselves to a potential expansion of Sainsburys along with a number of smaller units, whilst Burgess Junction could provide for a range of large and small units. The masterplan is however, only one interpretation of how the policy could be delivered and the actual size of the units are likely to change to reflect the requirements of those retailers wishing to occupy the units at the time that development takes place.
- 3.4.3** It is considered that being more specific in the policy would reduce the opportunity for flexibility and would run the risk of units which met the requirements of the policy in terms of their size, standing empty if a retailer requiring that particular size of unit were not available. This could be quite a problem if the unit was a large one, for example. However, the objective remains to encourage a greater national retailer representation whilst continuing to support the role of smaller independent retailers, but this is considered to be more of a role for the Town Centre Partnership and the Council in how Wigston is marketed, rather than for the policy to specify unit sizes beyond the indication that is provided in the supporting text.



3.5 New parking provision: Is the provision of at least 500 new parking spaces (policy 13) justified in relation to national/Leicester CC sustainable transport policy and the highway authority's car parking standards? Would the impact of a new two-storey car park at Burgess Street on the living conditions of neighbouring residential occupiers be acceptable? Would traffic congestion be a likely result of the proposal?

3.5.1 For clarification, Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 14 and Paragraph 4.70 refer to a multi storey car park at Burgess Junction but do not refer to a specific number of storeys.

3.5.2 Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 13 refers to the provision of at least 500 car parking spaces within the town centre. This figure includes the number of existing car parking spaces that would be lost to development. Currently there are a total of 306 car parking spaces on Junction Road car park; Frederick Street car park; Spring Lane car park and Paddock Street car park. Therefore 500 car parking spaces is a net increase of 194 spaces.

3.5.3 This increase in the number of car parking spaces in Wigston reflects the amount of new uses that the Masterplan introduces into the town, such as office and retail development which will generate extra parking demand. Provision of sufficient car parking spaces is important to support these developments and to attract interest from developers and occupiers.

3.5.4 The intention is that the multi storey car park would sit to the rear of the office and retail development (as stated in the policy) as it fronts onto Junction Road and Burgess Junction in order to eliminate and impact upon neighbouring residents (see cross section drawing Appendix 1). A slight amendment could be made to the policy where it refers to the potential for roof top car parking to state that this should be appropriately set back so as not to have an unacceptable impact upon neighbouring residential properties.

3.5.5 Traffic congestion is not likely to be a likely result of the proposal. In fact, one of the principal reasons for reducing the number of car parks in Wigston and introducing a main car park is to reduce the congestion caused by motorists driving from one car park to another trying to find a parking space. In particular, this is a significant cause of congestion on Frederick Street and at its junction with Leicester Road and Aylestone Road. The Burgess Junction policy proposes a single large car park that can be accessed without having to drive through the centre of the town and which will have a sufficient number of spaces to ensure that motorists do not arrive to find the car park full, resulting in them having to drive to another location to find a parking space. It will be important that the car park is supported by a strong and effective signage strategy, and this requirement could be added to the supporting text of Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 14.



3.5.6 The additional trips generated by the town centre re-development has been taken into account in the Wigston Town Centre Transport Report (Document Library Reference M1) and traffic impacts have been mitigated via a combination of measures to encourage and promote sustainable transport journeys, and physical junction improvements to improve the capacity of highway network constraints identified for key junctions. Whilst many parts of the town are constrained in terms of what can be provided, measures have been suggested to mitigation traffic impacts/congestion where possible, to ensure ease of movement around the town keeping it a viable and attractive place to work/live.

3.6 Existing parking provision: What would be the economic and social impact on the reduction of parking spaces in the Paddock Street car park, which several representations point out are used by local residents due to the shortage of on-street parking spaces, and by the disabled and elderly who use the nearby Age Concern facilities? How does the loss of these spaces link to the creation of additional spaces elsewhere in the town centre?

3.6.1 Situation Update 3.6 deals with the social impact and the effect on local residents, elderly and disabled people of the reduction of the number of parking spaces in Paddock Street car park.

3.6.2 It is not expected that there will be a significant economic impact because the policy requires that some public car parking remains in this location. In addition, replacement car parking will be provided at an alternative location (at Burgess Junction) which is a similar distance from the central areas of Wigston, such as Bell Street.

3.6.3 The loss of spaces in Paddock Street car park will be compensated for by the provision of a multi storey car park at Burgess Junction. Both sites are programmed for Phase 1 so that the amount of time that the number of car parking spaces in the town might be compromised due to development can be managed through the detailed plans for bringing forward development on both sites. It might be that, for example, alternative car parking arrangements are provided or development of Long Lanes is held back until sufficient car parking is available as a result of the Burgess Junction development.

3.6.4 Several representors have submitted Statements specifically in relation to the potential impact of Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 15 upon the Oadby and Wigston Branch of Age Concern located on Paddock Street. Situation Update 3.6 prepared by the Council responds to the issues that have been raised in these Statements.



3.6.5 The Statements reiterate the wide range of services provided by Age Concern and its extremely valuable role within the community. Whilst this is completely acknowledged and supported, any impact of Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 15 must be placed in context; both in terms of the actual impact that a reduction in the amount of public car parking spaces on Paddock Street car park will have upon Age Concern (which does not appear to have been specifically evidenced by the representors in their Statements); and, the benefits that implementation of Policy 15 will have upon achieving the overall objectives set out in the Town Centres Area Action Plan itself and the spatial strategy for the Borough as set out in the Core Strategy.

3.7 Gateway site: What is the reason for the location of the gateway site in the AAP? Should policy 13 refer to the proposed gateway improvement at the junction of Leicester Road/Frederick Street, as shown on the Proposals Map, and specify clearly what improvements the Council has in mind?

3.7.1 There has been an oversight on the Wigston Proposals Map Inset Map. The map should illustrate the other Gateway Improvement sites (Key Gateways) as shown in figure 4.1 of the Town Centres Area Action Plan (Appendix 2).

3.7.2 The gateway improvement sites illustrated on the Proposals Map Inset map represent the key access (whether it be vehicular or pedestrian) points into the town centre boundaries. They are significant public realm regeneration opportunity areas that once completed will announce the town centres, improve access and movement (through minor highway realignments) into the town centre boundaries, and create a sense of arrival and place.

3.7.3 As there are Gateway Improvement areas both in Wigston and Oadby town centres the Council is proposing the following policy wording addition to Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 11 – Public Realm, to take account of the gateway improvements illustrated on the Proposals Map Inset maps (for both Wigston and Oadby).

‘Gateway improvements, as illustrated on the Proposals Map Inset maps, are important areas of regeneration that seek to improve access and movement for the pedestrian and motor vehicle (where relevant) and create a sense of arrival into the town centres’.

3.7.4 All public realm works that occur within the town centres will need to be consistent with the strategy/approach set out in the Draft Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document. In the main, the Gateway Improvement sites for both Wigston and Oadby consist of minor highway/footway realignments to take account of the shared surface raised tables prescribed in the Town Centres Area Action Plan.



3.8 Has the potential for increased pedestrian priority (policies 13-16) been maximised? Should the proposed new shopping street (para 4.39) be clearly identified on the Proposals Map and in a policy?

3.8.1 See Situation Update Matter Three Issue 3.8 for information regarding pedestrian priority.

3.8.2 With the Masterplan illustrating only one possible way for the comprehensive redevelopment of Wigston town centre coming forward, it could restrict and stifle creativity if the extension to The Lanes was specifically shown on the Proposals Map inset. The areas (Burgess Junction, Chapel Mill and Long Lanes) in which development is to take place are shown on the Proposal Map inset.

3.8.3 How development comes forward within these areas will need to conform to Core Strategy and Town Centres Area Action Plan policy and provide the level of development set out in the Town Centres Area Action Plan, however development does not need to come forward precisely how demonstrated in The Wigston Masterplan. It is felt that by prescribing the amount of development and stating in policy that the new retail and commercial location should link to and incorporate the extension to The Lanes, rather than precisely show how development should come forward, will encourage a more fluid development approach that allows innovation and responds to current market need.

3.8.4 The wording in paragraph 4.39 and Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 14 – Burgess Junction should be intrinsically linked. The policy states that *‘retail provision should link to and incorporate the extension to The Lanes and therefore link to the rest of the Town Centre’*. However paragraph 4.39 speaks of the creation of a ‘new shopping street’. It is proposed by the Borough Council that paragraph 4.39 should be reworded to clarify Town Centres Area Action Plan 14, for example *‘The proposal is for an improved and extended retail and commercial location that will link to and incorporate the extension to The lanes, and which will become part of the core of the town centre. The area will be framed through high quality spaces and a series of large footprint retail units, incorporating double height space allowing for the introduction of mezzanines’*.

3.9 Are the proposed changes to any of the road layouts justified? Although policy 12 refers generally to highway works, should the specific highway schemes be included in relevant policies? Are there land use implications in any of these schemes?

3.9.1 The Town Centres Area Action Plan / Wigston masterplan are not proposing any major changes to road layouts within Wigston’s town centre. The following changes are proposed within the current masterplan for Wigston;

Burgess Junction

- There will be some minor amendments to the highway alignment along Wakes Road to accommodate the proposed access into the proposed multi storey car park.



Chapel Mill

- A proposed transport area along Bull Head Street will entail highway realignment to accommodate, however is referred to in Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 16 – Chapel Mill.

Long Lanes

- The eastern end of Paddock Street is to be made two way through re-marking of the highway and introduction of new (necessary) signage. It is not envisaged that any substantial physical changes will occur to the highway as its existing width is adequate for two way vehicular traffic. This improvement is referred to in Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 15 – Long Lanes.

- 3.9.2** With the Borough Council seeking bus waiting improvements along Leicester Road, consistent with those illustrated on the Wigston masterplan, it proposed that Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 12 – Transport and Movement bullet point 5 be changed to;

'Improved bus facilities along Leicester Road and access to them'.

3.10 Do policies 13-16 provide sufficient focus and direction to enable the potential for enhancing the public realm to be maximised?

- 3.10.1** All four of the policies prescribe (significant) improvements to the public realm of Wigston's town centre. Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 16 – Chapel Mill specifically mentions the continued improvements of Bell Street's public realm and states that the *'Borough Council aspires to further enhance its appearance with improved materials, tree planting and appropriate levels of street furniture to ensure an attractive shopping and leisure environment'*.

- 3.10.2** The Borough Council, in partnership with Leicestershire County Council, are currently preparing to submit a detailed round two full application (having already had Expressions of Interest successfully approved) for European Regional Development Fund. The application is based on significant redevelopment of the public realm of Wigston town centres key retail destination (Bell Street). The presence of the masterplan and the Town Centres Area Action Plan has assisted in the successful preparation of the Expression of Interest, and the 'round two' detailed application in order to demonstrate the strong relationship between the improvement of the public realm and economic investment in Wigston.

- 3.10.3** Although the Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document is mentioned within Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 11 – Public Realm paragraph 3.47, the Borough Council proposes to further strengthen Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 13 – Implementation of the Wigston Town Centre Masterplan, by adding the following sentence to paragraph 4.54.

'All public realm redevelopment or enhancement occurring within Wigston's town centre will need to be in conformity with principles and policy set out in the Borough Council's Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document'.



3.10.4 It is also thought appropriate to add an additional bullet point in Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 14 – Burgess Junction paragraph 4.61, Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 15 – Long Lanes paragraph 4.73 and Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 16 – Chapel Mill paragraph 4.89 that reads;

'all public realm improvements being consistent with principles and policies contained within the Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document'.

3.11 What is the justification for the proposal for new health provision in policy 14, in view of the representation by the Primary Care Trust that they are interested in another site?

3.11.1 The Primary Care Trust has identified the need for new health provision in Wigston but as yet has not found and secured planning permission for a site.

3.11.2 In previous versions of the masterplan a health facility had been shown. This was removed from the masterplan in the Publication version of the Town Centres Area Action Plan to reflect the position of the Primary Care Trust.

3.11.3 However, since a site has not yet been secured, and given the densely built up nature of Wigston which creates significant constraints in finding suitable sites of the size and nature necessary for uses such as a new health facility, it is prudent for the Town Centres Area Action Plan to continue to make provision for a health facility. However, in this instance a more flexible approach has been incorporated into Policy 14 – Burgess Junction that would allow for provision of the health facility in Wigston town centre should this be required.

3.12 Is the amount and type of housing provision in Long Lanes (policy 15) appropriate for local needs? Is there any housing potential in other parts of the town centre? Some concern is expressed that the proposed apartments, forming part of the mix in areas such as the Long Lanes, may continue to be unattractive in the current difficult market conditions. Is a proportion of affordable housing appropriate within the AAP and if so, how much?

3.12.1 The following information is taken from the Council's Choice Based Lettings System, which has details of those people registered on the Council's Housing Register, who have bid for a vacant Council or housing association property (i.e. those looking for affordable housing). The data below illustrates bids made of recent vacancies, thus giving an indication of level of need in each housing type:

1 bed property	35 applicants or 17 per cent
2 Bed flat	30 applicants or 14 per cent
2 bed house	75 applicants or 37 per cent
3 bed house	65 applicants or 32 per cent



3.12.2 The Borough Council has made a commitment to support the Leicestershire Extra Care Housing Strategy, which included the target to achieve 50 units of extra care housing across the County by 2015. Further needs assessment work is currently underway, however it has already been accepted that Wigston is a settlement that is in need of an extra care housing scheme (given the lack of existing similar facilities in the area). Possible locations have been explored, but nothing has yet been found to be suitable (the town centre site not being part of this exploration). The location within Wigston town centre and the sites level nature would be attractive in terms of suitability for extra care housing.

3.12.3 There is currently no evidence to suggest that the provision of apartments within Wigston town centre at Long Lanes will be unattractive at this moment in time. Along with affordable housing, and extra care facilities, apartments contribute to the mix attributed to sustainable development. Furthermore, it is argued that larger dwellings, particularly houses, will be more appropriately located in the nearby Direction for Growth.

3.12.4 Town Centres Area Action Plan Policy 8 – Use of Upper Floors, promotes the change of use to residential development. Although not specified within the Town Centres Area Action Plan, there is potential for a small number of residential units to be provided through (windfall sites) change of use to existing upper floors above commercial and retail. See Matter Five paragraph 5.7.14 onwards for more details on the change of use of upper floors.

3.12.5 The Core Strategy Development Plan Document, through Policy 11 – Affordable Housing, prescribes affordable housing to be sought on all developments of 10 dwellings or more to meet identified local need. Consistent with the Affordable Housing Viability Assessment, Core Strategy Policy 11 states that 20 per cent of all new dwellings within Wigston should be affordable in nature if a proposal triggers the 10 dwelling threshold. The provision of affordable units within the town centre is thus directly relevant to the scale of the proposals put forward for residential development.

3.13 In all other respects are the proposals for development in the key development sites at Burgess Junction, Long Lanes and Chapel Mill (policies 14, 15 and 16 respectively) justified and effective?

3.13.1 Through the Town Centres Area Action Plan, the Borough Council is committed in improving the existing offer of each centre and creating sustainable and high quality retail destinations specifically for local residents, as well as people further a field. Improving the offer of each town is paramount in their survival, and encouraging new retailers to the town to fill currently vacant units. Evidence suggests that an improved retail offer directly correlates to an increase in pedestrian footfall, which in turn increases economic spend and inward investment.

3.13.2 The level of development proposed within the Town Centres Area Action Plan for Wigston town centre is consistent with approximate levels of development set out in the Borough Council's adopted Core Strategy.



3.13.3 With regard to office development, block C2 has been shown on the Area Schedule (page 77) as two storeys, however this block should only be 1 storey. This amendment has been included in the schedule of minor changes along with the proportional reduction in the amount of office floor space referenced in policy 13.

3.13.4 Retail development is to be provided at both the Burgess Junction site (location for the majority of retail development) and Chapel Mill. The proposed new retail development, including the potential for a health centre, broadly follows the extension of The Lanes pedestrian network. The extension of The Lanes pedestrian network and the retail development situated along it, will contribute towards the town centres defined 'retail circuit'. The improvement and extension to the retail and commercial floor space proposed within the above development sites will connect the currently detached east and west of the town. As well as enhancing the retail experience and providing the level of commercial and retail development proposed within the Town Centres Area Action Plan, the creation of a 'retail circuit' will allow a more fluid pedestrian movement and gives the town centre a greater connectivity.

3.13.5 The Town Centres Area Action Plan is prescribing the majority of the public car parking to be located at Burgess Junction. The Borough Council are aware of the current issues with residents parking along Paddock Street and are looking to negate them. The reshaping of the car parking structure for Wigston will endeavour to encourage the majority of town centre shoppers to park within the Burgess Junction public car park to the north, thus reducing the need to use parking facilities provided along Paddock Street. The public car park reshaping, allied with the creation of a two way stretch of highway towards the eastern end of Paddock Street, encouraging traffic flow onto Bull Head Street, rather than Leicester Road will reduce the demand on residents parking towards the western end.

3.14 How much guidance does the plan provide to ensure that the development of town centre sites pays special attention to conservation and archaeological implications?

3.14.1 Through Core Strategy Policy 15 – Landscape and Character all new development proposals occurring within the Borough will be considered against the need to protect and enhance the distinctive landscape and historic character. All development should reflect the local character and distinctiveness in which it is situated.

3.14.2 Under advice from English Heritage the Borough Council are proposing to insert an additional sentence into paragraph 4.43 to read;

'any development proposed for the Long Lanes site will need to take account of the historical character of the locale and its situation within/adjacent to the Wigston Lanes Conservation Area. Proposals for development that do not enhance; or have a detrimental effect on the historical character of the Lanes area will not be encouraged'.



3.14.3 The Borough Council are also proposing the following additional bullet point to paragraph 4.73, to reflect the Long Lanes situation within/adjacent to the Wigston Lanes Conservation Area.

'enhancement of the areas historical character, due to its location within/adjacent to the Wigston Lanes Conservation Area'.

3.15 Are there any other development opportunities in Wigston that the plan should be addressing, eg public amenities such as toilets?

3.15.1 The Borough Council believe that all development opportunities that should have been taken account of in the Town Centres Area Action Plan process have been. Other development opportunities such as the location of publicly accessible toilets will come forward through more detailed work in the form of Development Briefs or Site Masterplans.

3.15.2 To ensure shoppers are attracted to centres and will return, the Borough Council will ensure public amenities are accessible, high quality, clean and safe. The provision of a well-maintained and properly equipped public toilet is accepted as a necessary amenity for the general health, comfort and wellbeing of visitor to a centre, particularly for carers of young children and the elderly.

3.15.3 Public amenities that are to be removed through the development process will be replaced in some form, for example, the existing publicly accessible toilets, currently a standalone building located on the Junction Road Car Park could be incorporated into the Burgess Junction development as part of a wider scheme or a reciprocal agreement with a range of town centre businesses and organisations to allow public access to their private toilet facilities in return for an annual fee could be agreed. This is known as a community toilet scheme.

3.16 Is the relationship between Wigston town centre and the developments associated with Direction for Growth to the south east sound?

3.16.1 The relationship between Wigston town centre and the Direction for Growth to the south east of Wigston is sound. This relationship was the principal reason for identifying land to the south east of Wigston to accommodate the Direction for Growth as opposed to alternative options elsewhere in the Borough and as such was a key consideration during the Examination into the Core Strategy where an alternative location for the Direction for Growth to the south of Oadby was under consideration.

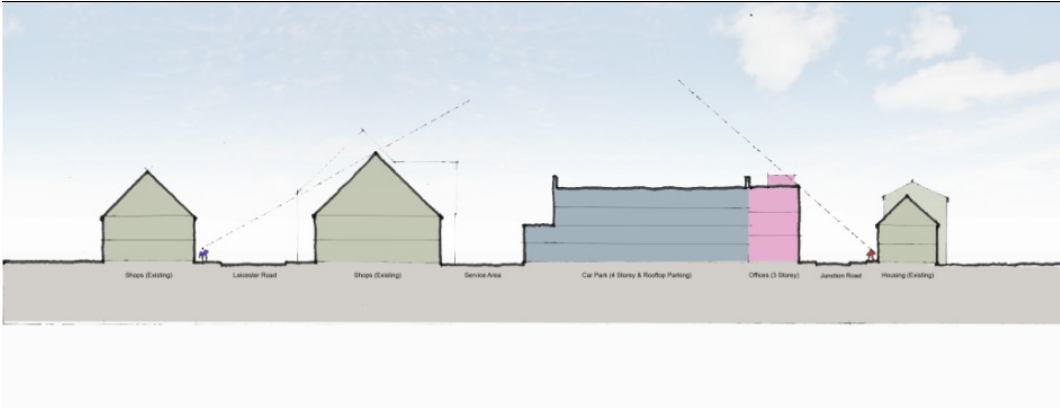


- 3.16.2** Given that Wigston is the main town in the Borough (and given the Core Strategy Objectives to reinforce this role and to deliver regeneration, investment and growth in Wigston) it is important to ensure that the most significant amount of new development to be provided in the Borough is closely related to Wigston town centre. The Town Centres Area Action Plan is consistent with this strategy and includes policies to ensure its successful delivery. This therefore demonstrates that it has been positively prepared, consistent with the test of soundness that has been introduced since adoption of the Core Strategy.
- 3.16.3** Paragraph 5.46 of the Core Strategy in referring to the Assessment of Highways and Transportation Implications (document library reference M3) identified that the Direction for Growth will allow 'direct links to the Borough's largest centre (Wigston) with an associated higher level of facilities. The provision of local services can help to reduce the need to travel and the urban fringe areas of the Welford Road corridor are within comfortable walking and cycling distance of Wigston town centre.
- 3.16.4** During the preparation of the Core Strategy and again during its Examination, discussions were held that confirmed that it is feasible to provide a direct bus link between the Direction for Growth and Wigston (with onward travel to Leicester city centre). Policy 16 Chapel Mill makes provision for a new public transport area on Bull Head Street in the vicinity of Bell Street which would help public transport operators to facilitate this direct link as referred to in Paragraph 4.87 of the Area Action Plan.
- 3.16.5** All of these issues were fully discussed during the Examination into the Core Strategy and the Inspector found that the relationship between Wigston town centre and the developments associated with Direction for Growth to the south east of Wigston to be sound, hence the Direction for Growth being identified in the Core Strategy in that location.



Appendix 1:

Leicester Road - Burgess Junction – Junction Road Cross Section





Appendix 2:

Wigston's Spatial Strategy for the Future



Oadby and Wigston Borough Council

Tel: 0116 288 8961, Fax: 0116 288 7828

Email: forwardplans@oadby-wigston.gov.uk

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council,
Council Offices, Station Road, Wigston, Leicestershire, LE18 2DR.